

A GUIDE TO CHRISTIAN
TEACHING

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A GUIDE TO CHRISTIAN TEACHING

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PREFACE

Some years ago the Board of Education of the General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America assigned the task of the preparation of a Junior Catechism to Rev. S. M. Rosenberger. He undertook the work, planned the booklet, and completed it to the extent of preliminary copies which he submitted to his fellow members on the Board.

Falling ill, he was unable to complete this task and it was assigned to his son, the undersigned, who succeeded him on the Board of Education and who has completed it as now published. The present booklet is thus a composite work. It is planned with the thought in mind of serving as a guide for the instruction of boys and girls in catechetical classes and other courses of instruction.

Since it has not been prepared in catechetical form, the Board of Education gave this booklet the title of "Guide to Christian Teaching." The title suggests that it is not planned as a detailed and exhaustive treatment of the subject matter but rather a helpful outline for teaching the great essentials of Christian truth.

May the Lord bless it to this end and make it a means of instruction in the truth of the inspired Word which is "profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." II Tim. 3:16-17.

A. S. ROSENBERGER.

February 15, 1936.

Bluffton, Ohio

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A GUIDE TO CHRISTIAN TEACHING

Chapter 1

GOD

Creator and Loving Father

God is the One who brought all things into being, and governs all things. We know Him as "Our Father which art in heaven" (Matt. 6:9). He cares for His creation. "Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" (Matt. 6:25). The greatest thing we know about Him is His love. The Bible tells us that God is love (I John 4:8).

The Son of God

We know also that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. (Luke 9:35, Matthew 16:16.) In the familiar verse, John 3:16, we learn that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. The Bible teaches us that Christ came to earth and after He had performed His mission, returned to heaven.

The Holy Spirit of God

We know God also as the Holy Spirit. Christ spoke of the Spirit as the Comforter. When Jesus was about to leave the earth, He said: "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father; He shall testify of me" (John 15:26). In the Old Testament (Isaiah 51:15) we are taught that God dwells with those of humble and penitent spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, and is our helper and guide. (John 16:13).

The Trinity

God is one God (Deut. 6:4) but has revealed Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). This we call the doctrine of the Trinity.

Attributes of God

We may think of God—

(1) As a great God. "O God, who is like unto Thee? (Ps. 71:19).

(2) As everlasting. "But the Lord shall endure forever" (Ps. 9:7).

(3) As all-knowing. "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man" (Ps. 94:11).

(4) As everywhere present. "Whither shall I flee from Thy presence?" (Ps. 139:7).

(5) As unchanging. "The Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17).

(6) As holy. "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts" (Isaiah 6:3).

(7) As the One who blesses us with good and sustains us. "Then shall the earth yield her increase: and God, even our own God, shall bless us" (Ps. 67:6).

(8) As merciful. "The Lord is merciful and gracious" (Ps. 103:8).

(9) As our guide. "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel" (Ps. 73:24).

(10) As our protector. "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress" (Ps. 91:2).

(11) As requiring something of us. "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God" (Micah 6:8).

(12) As the One whom we can trust. "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you" (I Peter 5:7).

Questions

Who is God?

What is the greatest thing we know about God?

How does God feel to mankind?

Who is Jesus Christ?

Who is the Holy Spirit?

What do we mean by the Trinity?

In what ways may we think of God?

Chapter 2

MAN

Man Created in God's Image

Like the world in which we live, man is the creation of God. The Bible tells us that God created man in His own image (Gen. 1:27). This makes it possible for man to have fellowship with God. To be created in the image of God means that man is a personality with intellect, emotion, will, and self-consciousness. God is the infinite personality, man a finite personality.

Man a Living Soul

Man is more than just a physical being. He has a body which needs to be cared for, and properly respected, but in addition he has a spiritual nature or capacity. The body is the temple of the Spirit. (I Cor. 3:16). Man is a living soul, and when man as a living soul is in right relationship to God, he is spiritual (Genesis 2:7).

Man to Grow

The normal thing for man as for all living matter is to grow. Man's growth is to be along three lines, namely: physical, mental and spiritual. The time comes when physical growth stops and we reach the period of maturity and then of decline; but mental and spiritual growth need never stop. Jesus is the great example of normal growth (Luke 2:52).

Determining Influences in Life

The kind of individual that a person turns out to be is determined by heredity, environment and will. Heredity consists of the traits we have when we are born. Environment consists of the sum total of influences that come into our life. Will is the direction that we give to our own development on the basis of choice.

Life's Relationships

There are three normal relationships of life. The first is to the world of nature, which man is to use for his own best interests (Genesis 1:28). The second relationship, that to our fellowmen, is to be one of brotherhood and service (Matt. 20:25-28). Our third relationship is that to God, whose sons we are to be (Gal. 4:7).

A Normal Life

To be in tune with God and our fellowmen is the normal life.

Questions

What is meant by the statement that man is created in the image of God?

What capacities has man beside the physical?

Along what lines should man's growth take place?

What influences determine each life?

What are the normal relationships of life?

Is living in harmony with God and man the normal or abnormal way of life?

Chapter 3

SIN AND TEMPTATION

Doing Wrong

We are all prone to do wrong (Romans 3:23). We sometimes do what we should not do, or fail to do what we should do.

Temptation

Sin is brought about through temptation. A temptation is anything that makes us want to do wrong. Temptation is not sin, but opens the way to commit sin (James 1:14).

The First Sin

In the third chapter of the book of Genesis the story is told of how Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, of their own free will disobeying God. Satan appeared to them and led them astray. Ever since, sin is present and becomes a problem to each and every one.

Missing the Mark

The word sin, in the Hebrew language, means literally "missing the mark." This shows what sin is—it is failure to be what God wants us to be. It is through disobeying God that men fail. Men love other things better than to do God's will, and thus failure is brought about.

All Have Sinned

To a greater or less degree, sin finds a place in the life of all. All men are guilty of some wrong doing. Jesus lived the only perfect life that has been lived among men. We should not forget that all sin brings grief and pain to the heart of God.

God Hates Sin

God is holy and wishes us to be holy. We are not holy when we fail to do God's will. We not only sin by doing wrong but by thinking things that are wrong. When we sin we turn from God to that which God hates.

What Sin Leads To

Sin separates men from God, and through sin we find ourselves farther and farther away from God, out of fellowship with Him, and having no hope of heaven but being subject to punishment (Romans 6:23). Sin may also lead to serious physical results.

A Way Found

But through Jesus Christ a way has been provided to deal with sin, and thus assure heaven and a life of fellowship with God to all who will accept the way provided.

Questions

Do people always do what is right?

How can we know when we do wrong?

What is the difference between sins of commission and sins of omission?

How are we led into sin?

Is temptation sin?

Where in the Bible do we find the story of the first sin?

What does the word sin mean?

Are all men guilty of sin?

How does God feel when men sin?

What is the result of sin?

Is there a way to deal with sin?

Chapter 4

THE LIFE OF CHRIST

His Birth

Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, of the Virgin Mary (Matthew 1:23), at the time this province was ruled by King Herod. As the Bible tells us, when it was time (Gal. 4:4) God sent His son. The name given Him was Jesus, for He was to save the people from their sins (Matt. 1:21).

His Boyhood

Jesus grew up in the village of Nazareth, in the province of Galilee. Not much is recorded in the Bible of His boyhood days. We are told that He was subject to Joseph and Mary, and was an obedient son. He was instructed in the word of God and learned it well. We find that afterwards He was able to give Scripture passages freely. At the age

of twelve He visited the temple and talked freely with the learned teachers of the time.

Public Ministry

At the age of thirty, Jesus went out to the Jordan River to be baptized by John the Baptist. Here He was proclaimed to be the Son of God, and then began His teaching, preaching and wonderful works. Many of His teachings are given in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7). His greatest works were called miracles. He made Himself one with the people wherever He went. He attended weddings and feasts, was present when death came into the home of His friends, and associated with all people for the purpose of doing good and helping any who needed help, and to tell why God had sent Him into the world. His heart was filled with pity when He saw people in need, and especially so when they were in need of something to make them better men and women. He gathered twelve men about Him and instructed them so that they could carry on His work. For a time great crowds followed Him and listened to His teaching. But when they found that He would not be an earthly king, who would free them from the rule of Rome, and set up a kingdom in great splendor, many left Him.

Closing Events of His Life

The religious leaders of that day were Jesus' enemies and they tried to take His life. Jesus told His followers on numerous

occasions that He would be put to death, and finally allowed Himself to be taken by His enemies. He was given over into their hands by one of His own number, Judas, who betrayed Him. The Jews condemned Jesus, and handed Him over to the Romans, who under Pontius Pilate, sentenced Him to death and crucified Him, He was buried and after three days, He rose from the grave, and was again seen by the disciples. He ascended into heaven, and is now there, our living Lord. He also dwells in our hearts, if we give Him a home there.

Questions

Where was Jesus born?

When did God send His Son?

Why was He called Jesus?

Where did He grow up?

What do we know of His boyhood days?

Where did He visit at the age of twelve?

What did He do at the age of thirty?

What characterized His public ministry?

Where do we find some of his greatest teachings?

What are miracles?

What was always Jesus' purpose?

Why did He choose a special company of twelve men?

Why did people become disappointed in Him?

What did the religious leaders of the day do to Him?

How did Jesus' earthly life come to a close?

Where is Jesus now?

Chapter 5

SALVATION

Why Jesus Came

Jesus Christ came to save a sinful world. God so loved the world that He gave His son. Christ so loved the world that He gave Himself. Jesus opened the way back to God. His coming was the means God provided for man to find that way (John 3:16).

Why He Died

Jesus said: "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." This He said to signify that He was to die upon the cross in order that men might be saved from their sins. (John 12:32, 33). (I John 1:7).

Man's Part

Christ was God's free gift to mankind, and by coming to Him and accepting the gift, we are saved and have eternal life. Believing Christ, and putting our trust in Him, we call faith. The Bible teaches us that, "It is by grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of ourselves. It is the gift of God." (Eph. 2:8, 9).

Explanation of Terms

A saving faith requires that we are sorry for our sins and are willing to turn from

sin, and look to Jesus for forgiveness, and help to shun sin and evil, and to live a life of obedience. This attitude is "repentance." When we enjoy Christ's forgiveness, we are no longer guilty before God of our sin. This is called "justification." When we are forgiven, God gives us a "new heart." This means that we have new desires and new attitudes. We have no love for the things that are displeasing to God. We desire to do the things that please God. This change we call being "born again" or "regeneration." God gives the Holy Spirit to believers, and thus dwells with us to keep our hearts pure, and guide our thoughts and deeds so that we become more and more like Him. This being set apart for God is called "sanctification."

Questions

How much did God love the world?

How much did Jesus love the world?

Why did Jesus die upon the cross?

What is faith and what is its result?

What is repentance?

What is justification?

What is regeneration?

What is sanctification?

Chapter 6

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Promise of His Coming

Before Jesus left this earth, He promised His followers a gift. He called this gift the Comforter (John 14:16). This is the Holy Spirit. He was to take the place of Christ in the world. The Holy Spirit then came at the time of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4).

To Whom Promised

When Peter began to preach he said that the promise of the Spirit was for those who were believers and their children. (Acts 2:17). This promise is for all believers. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you can have the Holy Spirit in your life (Romans 8:9).

A Helper and Guide

The Holy Spirit is to be our helper and guide. We must not deceive ourselves into thinking that the Christian life is an easy life. But this need not discourage us, for we have this helper, the Spirit, always near us. He is ready to help us over all difficulties, and to be our teacher. He is also called our Advocate, which means that He stands by our side to help (John 14:16 R. V.)

He Represents Christ

Christ said that He needed to go away,

that the Holy Spirit might come. The Holy Spirit represents Christ to us, so that when the Spirit is in our hearts, we can be sure that Christ is there also.

He Lights Up Our Hearts

The Holy Spirit lights up our hearts with the love of God, as electricity by the light it produces fills a room with brightness. This love of God within our hearts produces a loving disposition within us.

Our Teacher

A true Christian tries to make progress in the Christian life. We should want to know more of God's truth, and if we read God's Word sincerely and prayerfully, and do His will, we have the promise that the Spirit will be our teacher (John 14:26).

The Fruit of the Spirit

If we have the Holy Spirit in our hearts, we will have the mind and spirit of Christ. Paul tells us (Gal. 5:22, 23) that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. To Christ these good qualities were as natural as the air He breathed. If we are His true followers, we will strive for these things. The Spirit will produce them in us.

Questions

What did Jesus promise before leaving the earth?

What was the Holy Spirit to do?

To whom was the Holy Spirit promised?

What does Advocate mean?

Is there any difference between having Christ in our heart or the Holy Spirit in our heart?

What part has the Holy Spirit in our understanding of God's Truth?

What qualities are the fruit of the Spirit?

Chapter 7

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Serving Jesus Christ

There is nothing more blessed in life than to serve Jesus Christ, to do His will, and to actively try to be a true disciple of His. Jesus said to his disciples: "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14). After we have dedicated our lives to Him, and are united with His church through the confession of our faith, and baptism, we should seek to do His will above all else, and to find ways in which to serve Him day by day.

The Test of Our Profession

This service will be the test of our profession of our faith in Christ and our consecration to Him and His service. Christ said,

“Not every one that saith unto me, ‘Lord, Lord’ shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 7:21). Let us take to heart that Jesus meant exactly what He said.

Things Needed

To begin with, we may think of our Christian life as we think of our natural life. In this there are three things we need: (1) good food, (2) pure air, and (3) exercise.

The Bible

The food we need for our Christian life is given to us in the Bible. We should therefore read and study the Bible regularly. We should read it daily. Some of the aids to understanding it we find in listening to sermons in Church, in attending Sunday school, and other services of the church.

Communion with God

We can have the “pure air” in our Christian life by communion with God. We should talk to Him daily in prayer, and then meditate; that is, try to hear what God desires to say to us and to have us do. The best way to do this is in connection with our reading and study of the Bible. We can however, call on God at any time, and we have the promise that He will hear us. Especially in times of temptation we should depend on Christ for help. This help comes to us through prayer.

Spiritual Exercise

Then, we need exercise in our Christian life. If we do not take some exercise our bodies become weak and much sooner fall a victim to disease. So in our Christian life. The true Christian will not find this a hardship, for he will seek to do all the good he can and will desire to be a faithful part of Christ's body, His church.

The Home and the Church

Our Christian life should begin in the home. Here we should strive to be obedient, cheerful and helpful. The same should hold true in school and in our daily work, wherever that may have to be done. Above all, we should attend and take a part in the services of the church, and should remember that the church includes the Sunday School, the young people's society and possibly other organizations like missionary societies.

Our Christ-like Aim

In our Christian life it should be our aim to become more Christ-like day by day. As He went about doing good so should we strive to be helpful to others. We should not only seek to do our duty, but to do it in the spirit of love to Him whose we are and whom we serve. We should desire to be in the company of others who are His children, and try to observe the Master's command when He said, "A new command-

ment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." John 13:34.

Questions

Why is serving Jesus Christ the most blessed thing in life?

What is the test of our profession of faith in Christ?

What things are essential to the Christian life?

Why is it necessary to read the Bible regularly?

Why do we need to have communion with God in prayer?

Why do we need exercise in the Christian life?

Where should we begin in Christ-like service?

What example did Christ set for our Christian life?

Chapter 8

THE BIBLE

A Library of Books

The most important things God has to say to us are contained in a library of books we call the Bible. These books contain history, poetry, biography, commandments, wise sayings that teach us how to live, letters, teachings about salvation, and prophecy.

Law and Grace

The Bible begins by teaching us laws that we should obey, and it ends with good news of salvation and grace which can save us from our sins, and give us hope and gladness for this life; and a blessed life, free from all sin and shortcomings, in the hereafter. It teaches us of God who is just and righteous, and also of a Saviour who brought salvation to the world, and who is all-powerful and is ready to help us in every time of need.

Trust in God

The great message of the Bible is that of salvation; but the Bible teaches us also, that we are to trust in God, who is the creator of all things, who preserves what He has created, and cares for His children on earth. We are taught that God rules over His kingdom, that we are to seek first of all this Kingdom, and that then we shall receive in addition all things necessary.

The Bible God's Word

We call the Bible God's Word. This means that it was inspired by God. However, it was written by men. We know, for instance, that many of the Psalms were written by David, that the Gospel of Matthew was written by one of Christ's apostles, and that many letters were written by Paul. But these men when they wrote were guided by the Holy Spirit so that the writings recorded the truth and give us the true guide for our lives.

The Old Testament

The part of the Bible which contains the books that belong to the time before Christ came into the world, we call the Old Testament; the books that belong to the time after Christ came, we call the New Testament. The books of the Old Testament show how God made himself known to the world before Christ came. It teaches us that He is the one and true God; it shows how God is supreme in the world, how men like Abraham, Moses, David and others who obeyed God and trusted Him were able to lead God's people to victory if they followed His ways. It records also how His people failed when they disobeyed Him. In it also we have the promise given many times of a Saviour who should come.

The New Testament

The books of the New Testament tell us of the Saviour who came to save us and show us the way of life. It also tells of the church which He founded, and of its life and conflict with the world; it gives assurance and promise of final victory of good over evil, and the hope of eternal reward to the faithful. It teaches us how by prayer and the Holy Spirit we can and should live the Christ-life.

A Unified Book

While there are in all sixty-six different books in two parts in the Bible, it contains but one message, and that is the message of

God's love for us and his seeking us that He may give us eternal life.

A Father's Message

Think of the father of a family away from home on a long journey. He will certainly write often to His family and will have many important things to say, but the things of greatest significance are when He says He thinks of them continually and sends his love, and speaks of the time when they will be together again. So the heavenly father in His great message declares His great love for us, and gives us to know that even now He is with us by His Spirit, but also there will be a time when we will be together in the heavenly home and enjoy eternal communion there.

Questions

Why is the Bible a library of books?

With what teachings does the Bible begin?

With what teachings does it end?

What is the greatest message of the Bible?

What does the Bible teach about Trust in God?

Why do we call the Bible God's Word?

How was the Bible written?

What are some things that the books of the Old Testament teach?

What are some of the things the books of the New Testament teach?

To what may we compare the Bible?

Chapter 9

BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

Two Commands of Jesus

Jesus wishes, and commands, all who are his followers to be baptized, and join in the observance of a memorial of his death called Communion (Mark 16:16; I Cor. 11:24, 25).

Meaning of Baptism

Baptism is an outward sign of an inward cleansing from sin by the Holy Spirit. It is a means of confessing Christ. It is a sign of our forsaking sin, and turning to Christ to receive His life into our souls. It is, therefore, also a pledge of His saving us and of His abiding in us. The rite of baptism is, again, the seal of our joining the church of Christ, and so of our being given a place in the body of Christ (Matthew 28:19).

Who Is to Be Baptized

Who is to be baptized? We call to mind that water baptism is the outward sign of an inward cleansing. It is a sign, also, of our forsaking sin and turning to Christ. It follows that we need to signify our turning away from sin, and making profession of our faith in Jesus Christ, who is our Saviour from sin, by faith in Him. True repentance and faith in Christ are requirements for receiving the rite of baptism. The mere form

of baptism means nothing if it is not a sincere matter of faith and life. The outward baptism should therefore follow a profession of faith in Jesus Christ and dedication to His service (Acts 2:38).

The Stamp of Reality

Having a cleansed heart, and being by the act of baptism dedicated to God, it follows that we shall strive to live a life of service for Him to whom we have given our promise of faithful following. Consecration gives the stamp of reality to our profession. We have been by baptism received into membership of the visible church. The church has a right to claim our faithful membership, and we receive the means of grace and the blessings of fellowship to be found in the church of Christ.

A Memorial Feast

Before leaving this world, Jesus expressed the desire that his life and death should be remembered by His followers. To this end, he founded a memorial feast, in which bread and "the cup" were used as the visible means to turn the attention to the meaning which Christ taught them to give to it (Matt. 26: 26-28).

What We Remember

In the observance of this memorial, then, we remember especially Christ's death on the cross for our sins, and so receive renewed assurance of forgiveness; we have commu-

nion with Christ; we have a stronger sense of His presence with us, and so enjoy deeper fellowship. We join as His followers in this observance, and thus our love for one another is made stronger.

Who Is Invited?

The memorial is the Lord's Supper. Therefore those who stand in covenant relation with Him, that is, who have accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour by faith, and have dedicated their lives to Him, are bidden to join in the observance. It should be observed in faith; and as it has deep meaning, it should not be lightly regarded.

The Right Spirit of Participation

A real desire to honor Christ, to have fellowship with Him, and to reconsecrate oneself to better service for Him, should be felt by those who take part. The teaching of Paul is, "Let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup." (I Cor. 11:28). The church gathers as a family in this service and thus enjoys the fellowship of a band of followers united in Christ in love and friendship. From such a service observed in the true spirit we can go out with renewed consecration to Christ and His service.

Questions

What is the meaning of baptism?

Who is to be baptized?

What gives the stamp of reality to the stand we take in baptism?

What rightful claim is made on us after baptism?

Why is the Lord's Supper a memorial feast?

What are we to remember in the observance of the Lord's Supper?

Who is invited to partake of the Lord's Supper?

What is the right spirit in which to participate in the Lord's Supper?

Chapter 10

PRAYER

Communion With God

Can we have communion with God? Yes, that is what prayer is. It is our speaking with God and He with us. The Bible teaches us to pray. It tells us that God hears our prayers (I John 5:14).

What to Pray About

When we pray we often ask God for things. But that is not all we are to do. We should thank Him for what He has given us. Then we should just talk things over with God honestly and sincerely. We should confess our failures to Him and ask Him to help us to serve Him better. Especially should we ask Him to forgive our sins (Philippians 4:6).

How to Ask for Things

When we ask God for things, we should always pray as Christ prayed when He said to the Father, "Not my will, but Thine be done", (Matt. 26:39) for God always knows better than we do what is best for us. Sometimes He delays giving us an answer to our prayers and sometimes He gives us something different from that for which we ask because that is better for us.

When to Pray

When should we pray? We should have regular times for prayer. It is well to have a place to which one may go regularly to be alone with God in order to talk to Him. Then we should pray when we are in need. We should ask God for everything for which we need. An important time when we ought to pray is when we are tempted, and, again, when we need advice about what to do, or what not to do. We are likely to pray, and it is the Christian's privilege, when we are in difficulty or trial or sorrow. We should pray for others as well as for ourselves. We have the promise of the Holy Spirit to help us in prayer.

The Lord's Prayer

Jesus, our Master, spent much time in prayer. He also gave us the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9-13). This is a model prayer to guide us in our praying. This does not mean that we must always pray this prayer, but that it is to suggest to us how to pray. The

Lord's Prayer has seven petitions, the first three of which are concerned with the glory of God, and the latter four with the needs of men.

Christians are taught to pray to "Our Father, who art in heaven", which means that all Christians are brothers and have the same Heavenly Father. When we pray "Hallowed be Thy name", we are to remember to have the proper regard for the name and personality of God. We are to worship God and to reverence Him in daily living. "Thy kingdom come", is a glorious petition that the cause of God may ever continue to grow in the hearts of men, and among all men. The crowning words of all prayer are "Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven." There is no higher form of prayer than that the will of God should be done in our lives and in all life.

God makes provision for our temporal needs. "Give us this day our daily bread." It is true that man must also work for these things but nevertheless for their supply he is quite dependent upon God. The following petition forms a real test of one's Christianity. "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors", means that if we are to be forgiven for our sins, we must be willing to forgive those who have wronged or harmed us. When we pray "Lead us not into temptation," we are not to literally believe that God would so lead us, but that He does permit us to be tempted. As we overcome our various temptations we grow

in the Christian life. But if we are to avoid yielding to temptation, and if we are going to live pure and noble lives we can only do so by the help of God. So we are to pray "Deliver us from evil."

The Lord's Prayer then closes with the doxology, "For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, amen."

Questions

What do we call communion with God?

What things should we talk to God about?

When we ask him for things, what should we remember?

Why should we have regular times for prayer?

What is an especially important time for us to pray?

Why should we be very familiar with the Lord's Prayer?

What three petitions concerning the glory of God does the Lord's Prayer contain?

What four petitions concerning the needs of men does it contain?

Chapter 11

THE CHURCH AND CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

The Invisible Church

A Christian is a person who by faith in Christ has become a child of God. It is the

privilege of Christians to be joined in fellowship. Christ said when He was on earth, that He would build His church. (Matthew 16:18). The church is the whole company of true believers in Christ. It is spoken of as the body of which Christ is the head. This church is invisible.

The Visible Church

There is also a visible church. We think of it usually as those of Christ's believers, who fellowship together as an organization, meet together for worship, and in various ways and by different means carry on work in the Kingdom of God. In such an organization there are ministers to preach the Word and to minister to the congregation. There are other officials of the congregation. Such officers look after the welfare of the congregation, assisting the minister and conducting the affairs of the church.

The Church a Place of Service

Christ wants His believers to confess Him before men. Joining a church is a means of doing so. The church is the best place for us to engage in service for Christ. There is no other place where we can receive so much help to grow in our Christian life as in the church. We need the church and the church needs us.

Why We Need the Church

Let us see, first, why we need the church. We need the church for its teaching. It is the business of the church to teach us how

to be true followers of Christ and how to live truly by serving Him in our daily lives. The church takes a lead in standing for things that are pure, honest, noble and good. By being in the church we take our stand for these things and are in the best position to advance them. Then the church is the chief agency for the Kingdom of God. In the Church we find the best opportunities for rendering service for Christ. Here is our chance to help to bring others to Christ. We can engage in service in the various ways the church offers, and if Christ calls us to some special work for Him, we will be most likely to hear this call, while faithfully attending church services and taking some part in the work of the church. We also need fellowship with others of God's people. By so doing, our Christian life is made more joyous, and we receive strength and courage to live for Christ as we should.

The Church Needs Us

Now why and how does the church need us? There is a place for every one who has confessed Christ in the body of Christ, His church. That the church may be what Christ wishes it to be, we should not neglect to fill our place in it. The church can be strong only when the followers of Christ take up their duties and dedicate their talents to its service. We should give financial support to the church and its activities as missions, education, etc., according to our ability. The church needs consecrated gifts of money as

well as other gifts to carry on its work. In thus giving our support to the Church, we express our love to Christ, who is honored by the service of the church.

Questions

Who is the founder and builder of the Church?

What is meant by the visible church?

What is meant by the invisible church?

How is joining church a means of confessing Christ?

Why do we need the church?

How and why does the church need us?

In giving support to the church, to whom do we express our love?

Chapter 12

THE CHRISTIAN HOPE

What Comes After Death

Many, many years ago, a man asked, "If a man die, shall he live again?" The Bible tells us about this man and his question. The man's name was Job (Job 14:14). The Bible also answers the question in many places.

What Jesus Says

Above all else, we want to know what Jesus, our Saviour, has to say about it. He

said, "I came down from heaven not to do mine own will but the will of Him that sent me, and this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which He hath given me I should lose nothing but should raise it up again at the last day." (John 6:38-39). Again, He said, "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:1-3). We have thus the word of Christ himself that some day, and that is after this life, we shall be where He is, and therefore shall live with Him.

What Paul Says

The apostle Paul teaches us about the future life. He says, "This mortal must put on immortality," (I Cor. 15:54) which means that death is but the change from this life which comes to an end, to that life which never ends. What happens when we come to the end of this life we are told is that "the dust (our bodies) shall return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it" (Eccl. 12:7).

Assurance Through a Living Christ

But what is most assuring in this respect is the fact that Christ himself arose from the dead, and because he arose we know we shall live again. He had predicted that he would rise again. No man saw Jesus rise,

but many saw him after he had risen. Because His grave was empty, other tombs shall at last be empty also. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive," (I Cor. 15:22; John 5:28, 29).

The Judgment

We are taught that after death we must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. But the judge will be none other than Jesus Christ, who has become our Saviour by faith in Him. Christ taught, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death into life" (John 5:24). Thus those who are in Christ need have no fear of the judgment of condemnation to those "who know Him not."

Meeting Our Lord

While we need not fear judgment, if we fear God and do His will, we should watch and be prepared to meet our Lord with joy when our body dies, and our spirit enters in the life beyond the grave or when Christ will come again as He said He would, and commanded us to watch when he said, "Watch therefore for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" (Matthew 24:42).

Some day Christ will return to fully establish His Kingdom and visibly reign as Lord and King. His coming will mark the end of the age and bring in the Kingdom of God in all its fullness.

Questions

What great question did Job ask?

What does Jesus say in answer to this question?

What are Paul's words about immortality?

What happens at the end of life?

What is the greatest assurance of the future life?

What test must we meet after death?

Who is our judge?

How can we best be ready to meet our Lord?

Chapter 13

DISTINCTIVE MENNONITE DOCTRINES

Why Called Mennonite Doctrines

In addition to the great doctrines held in common by most Christian churches, there are several teachings of the Bible upon which the Mennonite Church has put special emphasis. Some of these are accepted in part by other Christian groups but the Mennonites have always been very thoroughgoing in putting them into practice. It has been our practice to take a very literal interpretation of the New Testament and to stress especially the Sermon on the Mount as the Christian way of living. We will need to become fully acquainted with these great teachings of the

Bible which Mennonite forefathers accepted four hundred years ago and which are vitally important today.

Separation of Church and State

The New Testament Churches knew nothing of merging state and church into practically one institution nor even of maintaining an active alliance between church and state. Accordingly the Mennonites from their very beginning insisted upon a complete separation of church and state and were the very first in Reformation times to make this emphasis.

Church Government

The local congregational government of New Testament churches has always been the pattern of the Mennonite church. The freedom of each local church in its own government is a prized possession of our Mennonite congregations.

Believers' Baptism

The Mennonite Church practices believers' baptism only and was historically the first of the Reformation churches to insist that only persons of adult age, who realize the need of baptism and express a desire to receive it, are scripturally qualified for this ceremony. There are no cases of infant baptism in the Bible but on the other hand many cases of adult baptism. The Mennonites accept faith in Christ as the biblical basis of baptism and administer it upon con-

fession of faith. This then is a distinctive Mennonite doctrine. It has found favor with several other Christian bodies and is now adhered to by approximately ten million communicants. Our church specifies no particular form of adult baptism. Pouring or sprinkling is commonly used.

The Sermon on the Mount

The early Mennonites were New Testament Christians and had a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. The Sermon on the Mount was to them a very heart of its message. Out of the literal acceptance of this great sermon came some of the following cardinal points of Mennonite emphasis.

Love Your Enemies

Turning to the Sermon on the Mount, (Matt. 5) we read, "Love your enemies, pray for them that persecute you." "For if ye love them that love you what reward have ye? Do not the publicans even the same?" "And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others?" "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you." This attitude of positive love and goodwill, combined with the Biblical injunction "Thou shalt not kill" has given rise to the Mennonite opposition to war.

Non-resistance

The Mennonite doctrine of opposition to war has expressed itself historically in the

attitude of non-resistance. Mennonites have refused to participate in war and have chosen to suffer the severest persecutions in order to remain true to this conviction. They have at times even left their homes and migrated to other countries to escape the compulsion of military service and other severe persecution attendant upon refusal. In general they have held to this doctrine of the love of all men and a firm refusal to harm any of their fellowmen whether high or low, rich or poor, saint or sinner.

War

The distinctive doctrine on war held by Mennonites is being more widely accepted by many Christian leaders. War is meeting the condemnation of mankind as a barbarous and un-Christian way of the solution of national difficulties. War results in a terrible loss of life and property and brings great woe upon humanity. It brings no permanently helpful results and increasingly is being repudiated by thinking men and women. This judgment is entirely in keeping with New Testament teaching and challenges each man and woman to put forth positive efforts to spread the Christian attitude of love and goodwill.

Non-swearing of Oaths

The Mennonites, in literal acceptance of Matt. 5:33-37, have become distinctive by refusing to use the oath. This refers primarily to legal procedure where the oath is

required, but applies also to swearing in the more commonly accepted sense. "Let your speech be Yea, yea; Nay, nay." The words of every Christian should be worth their face value without the addition of a so-called divine witness or penalty.

The Simple Life

Growing right out of the same source of Christian teaching, Mennonites have held that all Christians should live the Simple Life. Since we are all brethren on the same common plane before the Lord, there is no place for distinctions. We are a great brotherhood, interested in the good of one another, and in the good of all. Consequently there can be no masters and servants, no lords and subjects, no high and low in the sense that there are gradations and orders in the Christian brotherhood. The Christian is to live simply, sincerely, and honestly before his Lord for the greatest good of his fellowmen. If stewardship and service are the great objectives in our lives instead of preference and selfish advantage over one another we see clearly that the Christian life must be the Simple Life.

The doctrine of the Simple Life includes such things as modesty in dress and temperance in all things. The Christian cannot support or participate in the objectionable practices of the day in seeking amusement or accept the moral standards so prevalent in the world today.

Marriage and the Home

Mennonites have respected the sanctity of marriage and the sacredness of the home. Home life on a high plane has been the Mennonite ideal. Since the home is based on marriage, Mennonites have emphasized the sacredness and inviolability of the marriage bond. Jesus' teaching on divorce is as literally interpreted as other New Testament doctrines, and divorce is contrary to the teaching of the Church. "What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder." (Mark 10:9). Built upon the permanency of the marriage relationship, homelife has been further ennobled through the observance of the family altar. All Christian homes should have their daily periods of worship.

Biblical Doctrines

All these doctrines which Mennonites have emphasized are Biblical and are vital for life. Our forefathers did not turn to men for guidance but sought it in the New Testament. These principles are a great heritage to us from them, and it is our solemn and high privilege to teach them to our own and future generations.

Questions

Why do we speak of certain doctrines as distinctive Mennonite doctrines?

What are some New Testament principles that the Mennonite church has emphasized?

What is meant by the separation of church and state?

What is meant by believers' baptism?

What is implied in the command to "love your enemies"?

What do we mean by non-resistance?

What do we mean by non-swearing of oaths?

What is meant by the simple life?

What should our homelife be like?

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